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Note by the President of the Security Council

The attached letter dated 2 May 2003 from the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations was addressed to the President of the Security Council (see annex). In accordance with the request contained in the letter, the President is circulating the present note and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

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Annex

Letter dated 2 May 2003 from the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, I have the honour to bring to your attention the attached Statement of Patriarchs and Bishops of Iraq, issued on 29 April 2003 (see enclosure).

The Statement specifically asks that the future Constitution of Iraq recognize fundamental human rights, particularly religious freedom.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its enclosure circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Archbishop Celestino **Migliore**
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer
of the Holy See to the United Nations

Enclosure

[Original: English and French]

Statement of Patriarchs and Bishops of Iraq

Baghdad, 29 April 2003

At this moment, when Iraq is turning a page and is beginning a new chapter in its millenary life, we, the Patriarchs and Bishops of the Christian churches in Iraq, driven also by pressure from our faithful, wish to express our aspirations relative to the future of this country, in the hope that the Iraqi people, which has had a long history marked by defeats and successes, will be able, without religious or ethnic distinction, to live in freedom, justice and respect for interreligious and multi-ethnic coexistence.

When Hammurabi sculpted his Code on the stone of this land, law became the basis of the development of civilization.

When Abraham looked at the heavens above Ur, they opened up to him and, by this revelation, Abraham became the Father of a multitude of peoples.

When Christianity and Islam met, their respective "holy ones" initiated the two religions into a respectful and reciprocal coexistence.

In addition, by virtue of our original right of belonging to the most ancient peoples of this land, we claim for ourselves and for all those who live in it today, whether majority or minority, united by a long history of coexistence, the full right to live in a State of law, in peace, freedom, justice and equality, according to the Human Rights Charter. Consequently, we — Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syrians, Armenians, Greeks and Latins — forming together one Christian community, ask that the new Iraqi Constitution:

Recognize our religious, cultural, social and political rights;

Envision a legal statute in which each person will be considered according to his or her capacities, without discrimination, so that each may have the right to actively participate in the government and the service of this country;

Consider Christians as Iraqi citizens with full rights;

Guarantee the right to profess our faith according to our ancient traditions and our religious law, the right to educate our children according to Christian principles, the right to freely assemble and to build our places of worship and our cultural and social centres according to our needs.

And, lastly, we make this appeal before everyone — the Iraqi people, rich in ethnicities and religions, the political and religious authorities, as well as everyone who has the good of the country at heart, and the leaders of the international community.